DARK HORSE MANGA
BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL
127
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LIFE OR DEATH ONE SHOT
HIROAKI SAMURA
BLADE
OF THE IMMORTAL
color pinup by
FAREL DALRYMPLE
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BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

art, story, and front cover by

HIROAKI SAMURA

translation by **DANA LEWIS**
lettering and retouch by **TOMOKO SAITO**
back cover color pinup **FAREL DALRYMPLE**

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MANJI

Immortal *rōnin*, vowed to protect Rin and aid her in her quest for revenge

RIN

Last heir of the Mutenichi-*ryū dōjō* which was destroyed by the Ittō-*ryū*.

HABAKI KAGIMURA

Powerful *bangashiro*, serving the shogun and seeking the secret of immortality.

DŌA

A small, brash Ittō-*ryū* warrior, quick on her feet and eager to brawl.

ISAKU

Dōa's trusted body-guard, a hefty Ittō-*ryū* warrior arrested for a street fight Dōa started.

BURANDO

Deranged doctor and pioneer in *kessen-chu* transference.

THE STORY SO FAR

Infected by *kessen-chu*, mystical bloodworms which can heal all wounds and grant their host immortality, Manji's bloodthirst led to the capture and murder of his sister. To atone for this and for the 100 innocent people who died at his hand while he served a corrupt lord, Manji vowed to slay 1,000 evil men in exchange for the release of death.

Imprisoned in an underground cell beneath Edo Castle, Manji is an unwilling participant in Habaki Kagimura's "immortality experiments." Kagimura's demented lead doctor, Burando, increases the speed of the experiments as his sanity slips away. While searching for Manji and Isaku, Rin and Dōa stumble across a mountain of dead bodies and a simple-minded beggar who leads them to the "Badger Hole," an entrance to the underground tunnel system that runs beneath Edo Castle—and possibly to Kagimura's cruel prisons.

designer **SCOTT COOK** editorial assistant **RYAN JORGENSEN**
editor **PHILIP SIMON** publisher **MIKE RICHARDSON**

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無限の住人

LIFE OR DEATH

HOH! THAT MAN.
I SEE! A RAVAGED LOOK HE HAS...
LOOK! THAT'S HIM.
IN THE DUNGEON HE... WHISPER WHISPER...
AND THAT'S NOT ALL... WHISPER WHISPER...
DEATH GOD, EH? DIDN'T YOU KNOW?
A DEATH GOD'S WORK, IT IS.

YAMADA ASA-EMON, TOO! EVERY DAY...
THEN THAT MOUNTAIN OF CORPSES...?
A MON-STER, THAT ONE...
CAN'T BELIEVE HE STILL CALLS HIMSELF A DOCTOR...
YOU GOT SOMETHING TO SAY, SAY IT!!
DEATH GOD?! MONSTER?!! FINE, FINE! CALL ME WHAT YOU WILL!
BUT REMEMBER THIS!

THE NAMES OF *SHEEP* AREN'T *CARVED* IN *HISTORY!*
YOUR JOB IS TO BE *HERDED!*
CAN'T BELIEVE *I'M* A DOCTOR?! SPEAK FOR *YOUR-SELVES!!*
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
GOOD GOD! THE *NERVE* OF HIM.
A *BEG-GAR QUACK* TALKING LIKE THAT...
SKILLS THAT LAST A *CEN-TURY...*
...MIGHT SEEM LIKE *MAGIC* TO ONE'S CONTEM-PORARIES.

IS HE GOOD OR BAD? THAT'S FOR LATER DAYS TO SAY.
NOT FOR US TO QUESTION OR JUDGE.
HEAVENS... ALWAYS SO LOGICAL, KURATA-SENSEI...
WELL, PERHAPS SO... BUT...
はあー

KINMICHI: THE NAME OF ASAEMON'S SWORD.

BWAAH HAH HAH!
ASAEMON-DONO?! IS YOUR BLADE A BIT DULL?
DEAR, OH DEAR. LOOKY!
OHHH...
UNGK!
DIDN'T EVEN SCRATCH HIM!
UGHH...
.....
.....
.....
YOUNG BURANDO, I ALWAYS SAY...
...TAK-ING A MAN'S LIFE AND...
...WAST-ING A MAN'S LIFE ARE TWO DIFFERENT THINGS.

MY MEDICINE FROM HIS LIVER *CURES* SOMEONE'S *TB.*
A FELON DIES. YOUR TECHNIQUE *IMPROVES.*
HOW *SUPERIOR* TO DYING A DOG'S DEATH!
YOUNG BURANDO! SHOULD YOU...
THIS IS THE *PRODUC-TIVE LIFE!*
...KILL *THOU-SANDS! TENS* OF THOUSANDS! *MILLIONS!*
I WILL *STILL* SUPPORT YOU.
UH, NOT *THAT* MANY, BUT...
...BUT *THANK YOU!*
I'LL *DO* THEM AND *DO* THEM AND *DO* THEM!
HAH HAH HAH! YES, *GO* FOR IT.
BY THE WAY, LAD. HAVE YOU BEEN SLEEP-ING?

HYAKU-RIN...
DRIED CHESTNUT OKOWA?! GOSH! MY FAVOR-ITE!
AH HAH. IT WAS A LABOR OF LOVE.
FOR CHŌKICHI, THAT IS.
AND WELL, FOR GOOD LUCK, TOO.
EH?

YOU'RE GOING, RIGHT?
TO MANJI'S SIDE?
...YES.
HMM...
MM?
NATURAL-LY... I'LL LEND A HAND.
OH, AHH... THIS TIME...
...I THINK JUST DŌA AND I'LL GO.
YOU TWO?
YOU AND THAT CHILD?
...SHE'S TOUGHER THAN SHE LOOKS.
YES. ONLY... IT'S NOT AS RASH AS IT SOUNDS.
I'M NOT MUCH, BUT DŌA...

I MAY BE RUSTY...
...BUT IF YOU DON'T MIND MY SAYING, I'M BETTER IN A FIGHT THAN YOU.
WELL, I GATHERED AS MUCH.
BUT STILL, THERE'S STRENGTH IN NUMBERS.
YET...
...YET I'M ALREADY IN YOUR DEBT.
I'M NOT JUST SAYING THIS TO MEDDLE, CHILD.
THIS IS PARTLY MY RESPONS-IBILITY.
HYAKURIN-SAN.
WHAT ON EARTH?
HEAV-ENS! SINCE WHEN DID SHE TURN SO COLD?

IT'S NOT ABOUT *RESTRAINT*... NOR *FIGHTING SKILL*.
THIS TIME I HAVE *NO* INTENTION OF ASKING YOU FOR HELP.
NOTHING OF THE SORT.
IT'S JUST... THIS MORN-ING...
...GIICHI CAME BY THE *DŌJŌ*...

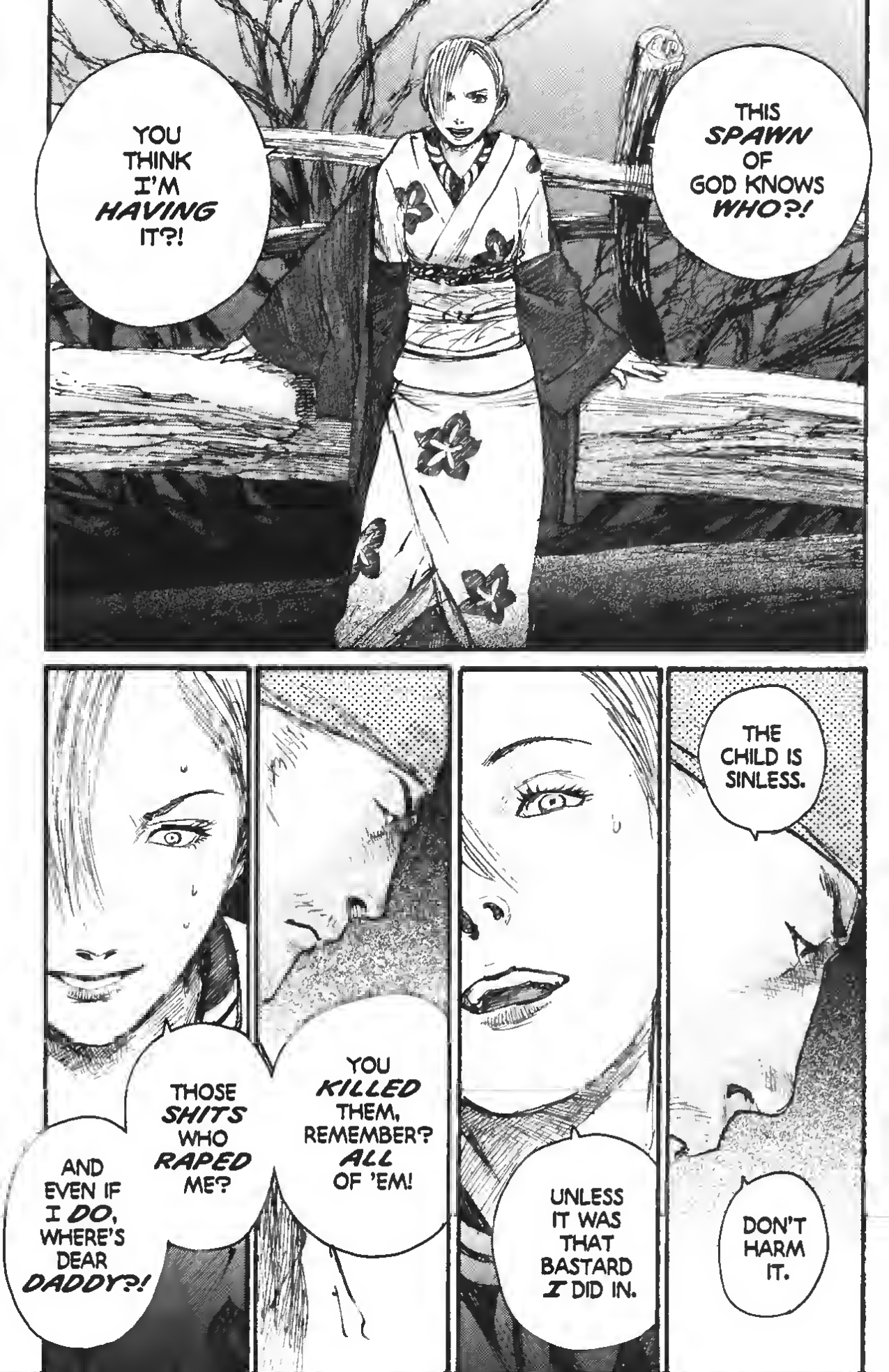
.....
.....
.....
SWISH

FWAPP
FEH!

GYURUGU
GYURUGU
.....
.....
.....
GIICHI...

...WHEN DID YOU NOTICE?
THAT I'M PREG-NANT...?
.....
.....
.....
THE OTHER DAY. WHEN YOU CAME WITH THE GIRL.
NO KIDDING.
THAT'S RICH.

YOU PAY MORE ATTENTION THAN I THOUGHT.
AND SO YOU TOLD ME TO SHOVE OFF?
...THAT'S RIGHT.
IN OTHER WORDS, BEHAVE MYSELF?
YES. YOU SHOULDN'T OVERDO IT SO EARLY...
...IN YOUR PREG-NANCY.
YOU'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE. BE CAREFUL.
PARDON ME?
"BE CARE-FUL," YOU SAY?
CAREFUL? AHHH HAH HAH HAH!


YOU THINK I'M HAVING IT?!
THIS SPAWN OF GOD KNOWS WHO?!
THE CHILD IS SINLESS.
DON'T HARM IT.
UNLESS IT WAS THAT BASTARD I DID IN.
YOU KILLED THEM, REMEMBER? ALL OF 'EM!
THOSE SHITS WHO RAPED ME?
AND EVEN IF I DO, WHERE'S DEAR DADDY?!

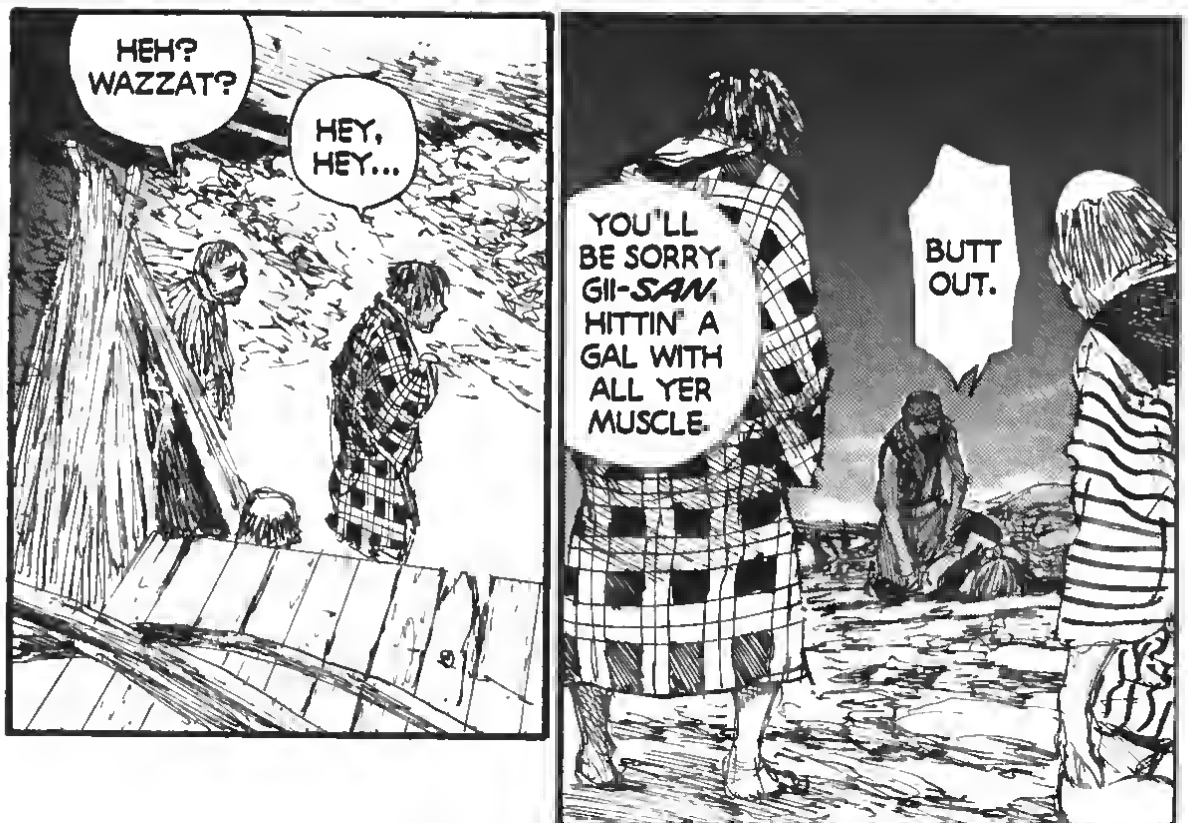
...HAH HAH.
AH HAH HAH HAH!
GIICHI...?
AHHH HAH HAH HAH...!
KNOW WHAT?
YOU WORRY TOO MUCH ABOUT ME.
YOU THINK I DON'T KNOW? WHY KAGIMURA FREED ME WHEN I HAD...
...MORE THAN FIFTY RYŌ TO GO...?

YOU PAID IT OFF. ALL OF IT.
BUT, OH-- SO SORRY-- I DON'T FEEL LIBERATED AT ALL.
MUST FEEL PRETTY FULL OF YOURSELF, HUH?
THAT'S RIGHT.
IT'S LIKE SHINRIJI AND I SCRIMP AND SAVE ALL THAT TIME...
...AND YOU COME ALONG AND SNATCH IT.
ALL YOUR DO-GOODER MEDDLING TURNS OUT WRONG.
JUST LOOK AT THE LIFE IT GOT YOU.
IT'S NOT ENOUGH KILLING YOUR OWN KID.
YOU GOTTA MESS WITH... WITH...

...THIS DAMNED... BASTARD...

THUD
GRK!
FWAM!

LET ME... GO...
SAKK
SAKK


HEH? WAZZAT?
HEY, HEY...
YOU'LL BE SORRY, GII-SAN, HITTIN' A GAL WITH ALL YER MUSCLE.
BUTT OUT.

:hahn:
:hahf:
:hahf:
:ahnf:
haa...
...OHHH...
...I...
I
CAN'T...
IF...
IF I
HAVE
IT...
I
CAN'T
DO IT...
NO...
I
CAN'T...
NOT
THIS
CHILD!

...SHINRI-JI... CUT APART.
...REMEMBERING...
...EVERY TIME I SEE ITS FACE...
THAT GODAWFUL PAIN... TEARING MY MIND APART.
THOSE BASTARDS, THEIR FACES, EVERY ONE...
THE POOR THING...
...THIS POOR LITTLE CHILD...
THAT WON'T HAPPEN.
IT'LL BE ALL RIGHT.
ME.

I'LL RAISE IT.
YEAH...
...MAYBE I'M A DO-GOODER...
...LIKE YOU SAY.
LIVING FOR MY WIFE... LIVING FOR MY SON...
ME?

I DON'T *WANT* A LIFE FOR MYSELF.
DON'T *NEED* ONE. *USELESS.*

HYAKU.

YOU AND ME? *MUGAI-RYŪ. ITTŌ-RYŪ.*
WE ALL *CONSUMED* LIVES.
BUT NOW, *YOUR* WORK IN THIS WORLD...

...IS *BIRTH.*
CREAT-ING LIFE.

THAT CHILD YOU CARRY?
CONSIDER IT OUR LAST CHANCE TO EVER BE NORMAL.
.....
.....
.....
IT'S TRUE. I KNOW.
YOU HAD TWO OF YOUR OWN *STOLEN* FROM YOU.
THAT WAS A *TRAGEDY.* BUT...

...BUT IF YOU'RE NOT...
IF YOU'RE OKAY WITH THAT, GO AHEAD...
...TAKE CARE OF YOUR BODY.
.....
.....
.....
.....
...BUT IF THOSE BOYS KNEW THEIR OWN MOTHER WOULD KILL A KID SHE DIDN'T WANT...
...THEY'D CURSE YOU FROM THE GRAVE.

GI-
ICHI...?
?
MM...
NO-
THING.
I LOVE
YOU...
.....
.....
.....
TO BE CONTINUED...

LETTERS

Send letters and fan art to:

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL, c/o DARK HORSE COMICS,
10956 SE MAIN STREET, MILWAUKIE, OREGON 97222

www.darkhorse.com • blade@darkhorse.com • philips@darkhorse.com

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GLOSSARY

Bangashira: Head of the *banshū*.

Banshū: Officers serving under the shogun, usually assigned to Edo Castle to defend the shogun himself.

Chōkichi: Chōkichi is the owner/chef of a dive that the Mugai-*ryū* frequented before they were disbanded.

Dōjō: A school for combat and self-defense training in martial arts; here, a training center for swordsmanship.

Dono: Archaic honorific used to show respect, usually for someone of higher rank.

Edo: Capital of pre-modern Japan. Later renamed Tokyo.

Ittô-ryū: The radical sword school of Anotsu Kagehisa.

Kessen-chu: The "sacred bloodworms." A person infected by them cannot die but feels pain like a mortal.

Mugai-ryū: Sword school of the Akagi assassins, literally, "without form."

Mutenichi-ryū: The sword school led by Rin's father (now deceased), destroyed by Anotsu Kagehisa.

Okowa: Rice steamed with condiments.

Ryō: A high-value gold coin.

Ryū: A sword school.

NEXT ISSUE!

A unique wraparound cover and the beginning of a major new story arc! The "Badger Hole" is a tunnel of death that leads into the bowels of Edo Castle. Rin and Dōa begin a reckless descent into this darkness, hoping to rescue their captive friends. The girls are reckless, indeed, but they're not going without a few *new tricks* up their sleeves!

ABOUT THE SWASTIKA

The main character in *Blade of the Immortal*, Manji, has taken the "crux gammata" as both his name and his personal symbol. This symbol is also known as the *swastika*, a name derived from the Sanskrit *svastika* (meaning "welfare," from *su*—"well" + *asti*—"he is"). As a symbol of prosperity and good fortune, the *swastika* was widely used throughout the ancient world (for example, appearing often on Mesopotamian coinage), including North and South America and has been used in Japan as a symbol of Buddhism since ancient times. To be precise, the symbol generally used by Japanese Buddhists is the *sauvastika*, which moves in a counterclockwise direction, and is called the *manji* in Japanese. The *sauvastika* generally stands for night, and often for magical practices. The *swastika*, whose arms point in a clockwise direction, is generally considered a solar symbol. It was this version (the *hakenkreuz*) that was perverted by the Nazis. It is important that readers understand that the *swastika* has ancient and honorable origins, and it is those that apply to this story, which takes place in the 18th century (ca. 1782-3). *There is no anti-Semitic or pro-Nazi meaning behind the use of the symbol in this story. Those meanings did not exist until after 1910.*

ABOUT THE TRANSLATION

The Artwork: The author of *Blade of the Immortal* requested that we make an effort to avoid mirror-imaging his artwork. Some manga are first copied in a mirror-image in order to facilitate the left-to-right reading of the pages. However, Mr. Samura decided that he would rather see his pages reversed via the technique of cutting up the panels and repasting them in reverse order. While we feel that this often leads to problems in panel-to-panel continuity, we place primary importance on the wishes of the creator. Therefore, most of *Blade of the Immortal* has been produced using the "cut and paste" technique. There are, of course, some sequences where it was impossible to do this, and mirror-imaged panels or pages were used instead.

The Sound Effects & Dialogue: Since some of Mr. Samura's sound effects are integral parts of the artwork, the decision was made to leave those in their original Japanese. When it was crucial to the understanding of the panel that the sound effect be in English, however, Mr. Samura chose to redraw the panel. We hope readers will view the un-retouched sound effects as essential portions of Mr. Samura's extraordinary artwork. In addition, Mr. Samura's treatment of dialogue is quite different from that featured in average samurai manga and is considered to be one of the things that has made *Blade* such a huge hit in Japan. Mr. Samura has mixed a variety of linguistic styles in this fantasy story, where some characters speak in the mannered style of old Japan, while others speak as if they were street-corner punks from a bad area of modern-day Tokyo. The anachronistic slang used by some of the characters in the English translation reflects the unusual mix of speech patterns from the original Japanese text.

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